

THE LINGUA FRANCA

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On the night of September 27, 1760, a large ship was wrecked on the rocks at Penzance in Cornwall. When dawn came, the local citizens found on the beach a group of strange-looking men wearing turbans. The ship was an Algerian xebecque or corsair, and had carried 220 men. The Algerians feared that they had landed in Spain, where slavery would have been their lot; they were overjoyed to learn that this was not the case, and exclaimed, "Inglaterra! Inglaterra! bona Inglaterra!"

Someone remembered that there was in town a certain Mr. Mitchell, who had been in the Levant trade and might be able to talk to the Algerians. He was accordingly fetched; and as he did indeed have some knowledge of the Lingua Franca, he was able to serve as interpreter (Noall 1968).

It is an indication of the importance of the Lingua Franca at that time that there should be, in a provincial town such as Penzance, someone able to speak it. This was probably the only occasion when the Lingua Franca was spoken in Cornwall, and one of the few times it was ever spoken outside the Mediterranean area. But in the ports along the eastern and southern coasts of the Mediterranean the Lingua Franca was for centuries the principal language used for communication between Europeans and the local populations.

The Lingua Franca is well known to linguists as the earliest pidgin language of which we have definite knowledge. It was a Romance-based pidgin, and seems to have arisen during the Crusades, the first large-scale contact between Western Europeans and the peoples of the Levant. From that time onward it was in regular use for many centuries, but finally disappeared during the second half of the nineteenth century. We are thus obliged to rely on historical records for our knowledge of it, and those records are unfortunately few, brief, and rather unreliable. The principal scholarly treatment of the Lingua Franca is an article by the great Romance philologist Hugo Schuchardt, published in 1909.

Schuchardt lists all the sources for the Lingua Franca known to him. The largest -- he calls it "die einzige umfassende Quelle" -- and most important is a small volume published in Marseille in 1830, Dictionnaire de la langue franque ou petit-mauresque, suivi de quelques dialogues familiers et d'un vocabulaire de mots arabes les plus usuels; à l'usage des Français en Afrique. (It is interesting to note that 1830 was the year the French conquered Algiers.) I have been unable to locate a copy of this book in this country, but the British Museum has a copy. The book contains only 107 pp.; the dialogues are found

on pp. 93-98. I obtained a xerox copy of the dialogues from the British Museum; these dialogues constitute the corpus on which the present study is based.

The dialogues are grouped into eight sections, each devoted to a particular topic. There is a total of 142 sentences. The dialogues are given in the Appendix to this paper, with indications of the page number and section number in the Dictionnaire.

The entire corpus was punched on cards for input to a computer. The computer was programmed to produce several types of print-out. First was a complete concordance. For this a regular computer program for key-word in context was used; every word in the corpus was treated as a key-word. Equally valuable was a concordance with reverse alphabetization, since this groups together all words with the same endings. I also made use of two types of frequency listings of word-types, one arranged alphabetically and the other in frequency order.¹

The texts are given in a French-based orthography. The orthography is used in a reasonably consistent way, but some variants occur. The majority of the words are Italian, most of the rest Spanish. For most of the Italian words the spelling suggests a pronunciation identical or nearly so with standard Italian, and we may assume that this was the norm. The case was probably different with the Spanish words: in view of French spelling habits and Italian pronunciation habits, words such as ablar, adios, and amigo were probably pronounced with medial stops, not spirants.

Two general differences from Italian pronunciation may be noted. First, Italian double consonants are usually simplified, and this probably reflects the actual pronunciation. Second, vowels are frequently raised. This is most notable in the infinitive of the verb: with the exception of a single verb root, all verbs ending in -ere in Italian or -er in Spanish appear in the *Lingua Franca* with -ir. In a few cases -ou is found for -o: mouchou, ellou, and bonou regularly, tempou once (but tempo five times); in the great majority of cases, however, -o occurs. Similarly, -e is sometimes raised to -i: grandi, forti, genti (Schuchardt considered this last as going back to an original plural form, but his argument is not convincing, and it is more probably due simply to vowel raising); but the Italian -e is found in the majority of cases. Other instances of vowel-raising are francis (S francés), counchar (I conciare), mountar (I montare), and poudir (S poder).

A few *Lingua Franca* words differ from their Italian originals in special ways; these will be commented on later.

The *Lingua Franca* had two classes of inflected words, verbs and adjectives (or three, if articles are considered separately from adjectives). Verbs have two forms; from the point of view of the *Lingua Franca* itself, these are the base form and the past; in terms of their origin they are the infinitive and the past participle. The base form ends in -ar, -ir, or -er. The corpus contains 26 different verbs in -ar and 18 in -ir. Only one verb root in -er occurs, piacher, which

is found both as a simplex and in the compound dispiacher. Only a few past forms are found in the corpus. Four verbs occur in both base and past forms: far fato, mirar mirato, sentir sentito, and venir venouto. One verb is found in the past only, perso; it is worthy of note that this is an irregular participle form in Italian, although the regular form perduto not only exists but is in commoner use; thus a pidgin does not always select the simplest possible form from the base language. Future meaning may be made specific by using bisognio, e.g. bisognio andar domani (96, 5), glossed as 'Nous irons demain.'

Articles and adjectives have two forms each, masculine and feminine. The definite article has masculine il, feminine la; il becomes l' before a vowel or y. The indefinite article has oun and ouna. Most adjectives end in -o for the masculine and -a for the feminine; adjectives in -i have only one form for both genders. The scanty material of the corpus offers relatively few instances involving adjective agreement, but as far as it goes agreement is strictly observed. There are only two instances for feminines in -a: star bouona genti (94, 2) and la mangiaria star pronta (96, 6); there is one instance of a feminine noun used with an adjective in -i: in strada grandi (96, 5). There are numbers of instances of agreement with masculine nouns.

Nouns are not inflected; there is nothing in the corpus which can be considered a plural noun form. Nouns do, however, fall into two crypto-classes by gender, corresponding with the Italian gender classes.

Syntax in general and word-order in particular usually agree with those in Italian, within the limits imposed by the drastically reduced inflections. Unlike Italian, the personal pronoun is frequently used with the imperative, e.g. ti mountar, ti baschiar (95, 4). The most striking syntactic feature of the Lingua Franca is the employment of per with personal pronouns used as objects, e.g. ti conoschir per ellou? (96, 5); this is parallel to the use of a in Spanish and particularly to the use of pe in Rumanian.

The corpus includes 191 different words (word-types). However, nine of these are merely spelling variants of other words, while another ten are inflected forms of other words in the corpus, and three (al, del, della) are combinations of preposition and article. The basic word stock of the corpus is therefore 169.

Of these 169 words, no less than 141 may be considered as deriving from Italian, 18 from Spanish, and 10 from other languages. Actually, some of the words I have classed as Italian could equally well be considered as Spanish in origin; but since the bulk of the vocabulary is Italian, the presumption is always for Italian origin unless there are good reasons for thinking otherwise.

Three of the Italian words show syncope, loss of an unstressed vowel: orologio (I orologio), zoukro (I zucchero), and spétar (I aspettare); the latter is an interesting case, because Italian does have a verb spettare, but it means 'to concern'; since spétar and aspettare both mean 'to wait', the latter must be the source of the Lingua Franca word.

A few words show the vowel-raising mentioned above; in addition to words already given, these include inglis (I inglese) and paise (I paese). One word appears to show vowel-lowering: responder (I rispondere); but perhaps this is after all from Spanish, which has responder. One word has an inexplicable vowel: sarar (I serrare); this may be simply a misprint.

Some Lingua Franca words are found in Italian, but are not now the usual word in the given meaning: fora (usual I fuori), logo (usual I luogo), and ove (usual I dove).

The word nabolitan shows by its form its true Neapolitan origin

The word mangiarìa, glossed as 'déjeuné', is clearly Italian in origin, but the word is not found in present-day Italian. According to Schuchardt, it was borrowed into Arabic, which is thus the immediate source of the Lingua Franca word.

In terms of form LF tenir could come equally well from I tenere or S tener, but its exclusive use in the meaning 'to have' clearly shows its Spanish origin.

The verb 'to be' in the Lingua Franca is star. Spanish grammars customarily state that Spanish has two verbs 'to be', ser and estar. Nothing similar will be found in Italian grammars; but in actual usage Italian frequently has stare corresponding with S estar. There is thus no bar to considering LF star to be of Italian origin.

LF mouchou obviously comes from S mucho (with vowel-raising); but it is used not only for S mucho but also for S muy, e.g. star mouchou bonou (94, 2). Its use thus parallels that of I molto (which is also used in the Lingua Franca). We may therefore say that mouchou derives morphemically from Spanish, but syntactically from Italian.

LF baschiar 'descendez' presents a problem with its medial shibilant; if it is of Spanish origin, then it represents the old Spanish form, as modern Spanish has bajar. Or perhaps the origin of the Lingua Franca word is to be sought in Catalan, which in baixar has to this day a similar sounding form.

LF acoussi 'ainsi' is obviously a Romance word, but its immediate origin is not at all clear in terms of the Romance standard languages. There is, however, a South Italian dialect form akkussi with the same meaning, and this must be the source of the Lingua Franca word.

LF bacha 'pacha' is of Turkish origin. The original form in Turkish was baş, deriving from baş 'head', but this was long ago replaced in Turkish by paşa, which explains the p in most European languages. It is unlikely that the Lingua Franca form goes back to the original Turkish form, however. Arabic has no p-phoneme, and regularly substitutes b for p in borrowed words (cf. Lebanese bazabört). Thus the LF word is presumably borrowed from Arabic.

LF cadiéra 'chaise' comes from Provençal.

The Lingua Franca pronoun ellou 'lui' is clearly Romance, but its immediate origin remains a problem.

According to Schuchardt, LF fantétzia has its immediate origin in Arabic, where fantasia underwent development of meaning resulting finally in the Lingua Franca meaning 'stubbornness'. But the form of LF fantétzia remains unexplained, unless perhaps the second t is a mere spelling quirk.

Among modern languages, LF fazir most resembles Portuguese fazer. A more likely source is Old Spanish, which had the same form as Portuguese.

The final vowel of LF febra, in view of I febbre and S fiebre, remains a puzzle.

Schuchardt says that LF gribouila 'fuss' owes its form to F gri-bouille 'simpleton' and its meaning to I garbuglio 'turmoil'.

The origin of LF nemsa 'autrichien' is clearly Slavic and is most probably to be sought in the Serbo-Croatian accusative case form nemca.

LF yoldach 'Turcs' is borrowed from Turkish yoldaş 'comrade'; in view of the shift in meaning, the immediate source is probably Arabic.

LF mountar and poudir were cited above as instances of vowel-raising. They might equally well derive from Provençal, which has mounta and poudé (the original -r was lost in Provençal; either it still existed at the time of the Lingua Franca borrowing, or else it was restored by analogy).

The Lingua Franca has one feature of interest which it shares with other pidgins, the replacement of certain common verbs by verbs of originally stronger meaning: LF counchar 'do' (I conciare 'repair'), LF mirar 'see' (I mirare 'look'), and LF sentar 'sit, live' (S sentar 'sit').

A further characteristic of the Lingua Franca vocabulary is the existence of doublets or alternative words for given meanings: mouchou and molto for 'much, very', quéir and volir for 'to want', far, fazir, and counchar for 'to do'. Schuchardt cites further examples from the body of the dictionary.

One typical pidgin trait, repetition, occurs only once in the corpus: siémé siémé 'ensemble'.

In summary, the Lingua Franca is a typical pidgin in terms of structure. As far as the present corpus goes, it is definitely Italian-based, but includes words from Spanish and other languages. It served a useful purpose for many centuries, but with the changing times has now disappeared.

NOTE

¹I want to thank Mr. Kris Arheart and Mrs. Beth Unger of the Kansas State University Computing Center for handling computer processing of the Lingua Franca data.

REFERENCES

Dictionnaire de la langue franque ou petit-mauresque, suivi de quelques dialogues familiers et d'un vocabulaire de mots arabes les plus usuels; à l'usage des Français en Afrique. 1830. Marseille.

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APPENDIX

Phrases found on pp. 93-98 of the Dictionnaire de la langue franque ou petit-mauresque.

93

No. 1

Pour Affirmer ou Nier

questo star véro.
 questo non star véro.
 questo star tropo véro.
 mi doubitar di questo.
 non tenir doubio.
 cosà volir scométir?
 mi scométir qoualqué cosa.
 mi scométir cosà ti quérir.
 ti crédir per mi, mi poudir
 assicourar per ti.
 star acoussi.
 mi pensar si.
 mi pensar no.
 mi ablar si.
 mi ablar no.
 per la palabra di mi.
 mi ablar dgiousto.
 mi crédir per ti.
 mi non crédir ouna palabra.
 mi non poudir crédir.
 questo star falso.

Cela est vrai.
 Cela n'est pas vrai.
 Cela n'est que trop vrai.
 J'en doute.
 Il n'y a point de doute.
 Que voulez-vous parier?
 Ja (sic) gagerais quelque chose.
 Je gagerais ce que vous voudrez.
 Croyez-moi, je puis vous
 l'assurer.
 C'est ainsi.
 Je crois que oui.
 Je crois que non.
 Je dis que oui.
 Je dis que non.
 Sur ma parole.
 Je dis la vérité.
 Je vous crois.
 Je n'en crois pas une parole.
 Je ne saurais croire.
 Cela est faux.

No. 2

Pour Remercier et Complimenter

bon dgiorno Signor.
 commé ti star?
 me star bonou, é ti.
 mi star contento mirar per ti.
 94

gratzia.
 mi poudir servir per ti per
 qoualké cosa?
 mouchou gratzia.
 ti dar una cadiéra al Signor.
 non bisogna.
 mi star béné acoussi.
 commé star il fratello di ti?
 star mouchou bonou.
 star in casa?
 no, star forà.
 E il padré di ti commé star?

non star bouonou.
 cosa ténir.
 ténir fébra.
 dispiacher mouchou per mi.
 molto tempo ti non mirato
 Signor M.?
 mi mirato iéri.
 star bouona genti.
 quando ti mirar per ellou
 saloutar mouchou per la
 parté di mi.
 Adios amigo.

Bon jour, Monsieur.
 Comment vous portez-vous?
 Je suis bien, et vous.
 Je suis bien aise de vous voir.

Je vous remercie.
 Puis-je vous servir en quelque
 chose?
 Je vous suis fort obligé.
 Donnez une chaise à Monsieur.
 Il n'est pas nécessaire.
 Je suis bien comme cela.
 Comment se porte votre frère?
 Il se porte fort bien.
 Est-il à la maison?
 Non, il est sorti.
 Et Monsieur votre père comment
 est-il?
 Il n'est pas bien.
 Qu'a-t-il?
 Il a la fièvre.
 J'en suis bien fâché.
 Y a-t-il long-tems (sic) que vous
 n'avez vu Monsieur M.
 Je l'ai vu hier.
 C'est un brave homme.
 Quand vous le verrez faites lui
 mes complimens (sic).

Adieu mon ami.

No. 3

Pour Consulter

cosa counchar?
 cosa bisogno counchar?
 qué pensar?
 cosa ti quérir counchar?
 bisogno counchar accoussi.
 95
 mi pensar star mefo.
 sé mi star al logo di ti, mi
 counchar, ou fazir.
 qué servir touto qouesto?
 ti laschiar counchar per mi.

Que fasons-nous (sic)?
 Que faut-il faire?
 Qu'en pensez-vous?
 Que voudriez-vous faire?
 Fasons (sic) comme cela.

Il me semble qu'il vaudrait mieux.
 Si j'étais à votre place je
 ferais.
 A quoi servira tout cela?
 Laissez-moi faire.

No. 4

Pour Aller et Venir

qui star aki?
 intrar.
 oundé ti vénir?
 mi vénir della casa di mi.
 ové ti andar?
 mi andar spasségier.
 mi andar mirar oun amigo.
 mi andar in casa del Signor.
 ti quérir mi andar con ti?
 si, andar siémé siémé.
 ti vénir aki?
 ti mountar, ti baschiar.
 andar fora.
 andar fora di casa.
 fazir ou councchar presto.
 tornar soubito.
 andar poco poco.
 mi tenir prémoura.
 ti sentar, ou ti sédir.
 spétar oun poco.
 aprir la bentana.
 sarar la porta.

Qui est là?
 Entrez.
 D'où venez-vous?
 Je viens de chez moi.
 Où allez-vous?
 Je vais me promener.
 Je vais voir un ami.
 Je vais chez Monsieur M.
 Voulez-vous que j'aïlle avec vous?
 Oui, allons ensemble.
 Venez ici? (sic)
 Montez, descendez.
 Allez-vous en. (sic)
 Sortez de la maison.
 Dépêchez-vous.
 Revenez de suite.
 Allez doucement.
 Je suis pressé.
 Asseyez-vous.
 Attendez un peu.
 Ouvrez la fenêtre.
 Fermez la porte.

No. 5

D'Entendre, de Comprendre et de Connaître

sentir.
 96
 sentir per mi?
 capir?
 mi sentir bonou.
 mi capir oun poco per ti.
 cosa ti ablar?
 respondir per mi.
 qui star qouesto signor qué
 poco poco ablar per ti.
 ti conoschir per ellou?
 mi sentito ablar di ellou.
 mi mirato in casa di ti.
 ové sentar?
 in strada grandi.
 di qué païsé star?
 star francis, inglis,
 esbagniol, portuguès,
 nabolitan, toscan, nemsas,
 moskovit, amérikan, danés,
 suédés, flamin.
 mouchou tempou di conoschir
 per ellou?
 té nir poco tempo.

Écoutez.
 M'entendez-vous?
 Comprenez-vous?
 J'entends bien.
 Je vous comprends un peu.
 Que dites-vous?
 Répondez-moi.
 Qui est-ce (sic) Monsieur qui
 vous parlait tantôt. (sic)
 Le connaissez vous (sic)?
 J'ai entendu parler de lui.
 Ja l'ai vu chez vous.
 Où demeure-t-il?
 Dans la grand'rue.
 De quel pays est-il?
 Il est français, anglais,
 espagnol, portugais,
 napolitain, toscan, autrichien,
 russe, amérikan, danois,
 suédois, hollandais.
 Y a-t-il long-temps (sic) que vous
 le connaissez?
 Il y a peu de temps.

me ténir piacher conoschir per ellou.	Je serais bien aise de faire sa connaissance.
bisognio andar mirar per ellou siémé siémé.	Nous irons le voir ensemble.
gouando piacher per ti.	Quand il vous plaira.
bisognio andar domani.	Nous irons demain.

No. 6

Du Déjeuner

ti fato colatzioné?	Avez-vous déjeuné?
non, Signor.	Non, Monsieur.
ti venir dgiousto, la mangiaria star pronta.	Vous venez à propos, le déjeuné (sic) est prêt.
97	
mi venouto aposto per far mangiaria con ti.	Je suis venu exprès pour déjeuner avec vous.
bonou? qué ti quérir mangiar.	Bien, que voulez-vous prendre?
quello qué ti quérir.	Ce qu'il vous plaira.
ti quérir café?	Voulez-vous du café?
portar café.	Apportez le café.
fazir scaldar agoua; mi quérir counchar thé.	Faites chauffer de l'eau; je veux faire du thé.
non counchar per mi, il café basta.	N'en faites pas pour moi, le café me suffit.
mi ténir thé mouchou bonou; mi querir ti goustar per ellou.	J'ai du thé délicieux; je veux que vous en goûtiez.
mouchou gratzia.	Je vous suis bien obligé.
ti métir oun poco piou zoukro.	Mettez-y un peu plus de sucre.
mi ténir bastantza.	J'en ai assez.

No. 7

De l'Heure et du Temps

qué ora star?	Quelle heure est-il?
qué ora ti pensar star?	Quelle heure croyez-vous (sic) qu'il soit?
mi pensar non star tré ora.	Je pense qu'il n'est pas trois heures.
poco poco star quatr'ora.	Il est bientôt quatre heures.
non star tardi.	Il n'est pas tard.
mirar qué ora star al orologio di ti.	Voyez quelle heure il est à votre montre.
non andar bonou.	Elle ne va pas bien.
andar avanti, andar indietro.	Elle avance, elle retarde.
Comé star il tempo?	Quel temps fait-il?
il tempo starbello.	Il fait beau temps.
il tempo star cativo.	Il fait mauvais temps.
98	
fazir caldo.	Il fait chaud.
fazir frédo.	Il fait froid.
fazir vento.	Il fait du vent.

cascar agoua.
fazir caldo mouchou.

Il pleut.
Il fait une chaleur étouffante.

No. 8

Pour Demander ce qu'il y a de Nouveau.

qué nouova?
mi non sentito nada.
qué hablar in chità?
genti hablar tenir gouerra.
Gouerra, con qué natzion?
con Francis.
qué poudir councar il Francis
contra di Algieri?
per maré nada, ma per terra il
Francis star mouchou forti.
sé il Francis sbarkar, Algiéri
star perso.
mi pensar l'Algérino non
combater.
dounqué bisogno il Bacha quérir
paché.
si, sé non quérir morir.
sé quérir paché l'Yoldach fazir
gribouila.
perqué non councar paché
perqué il Bacha tenir fantétzia.

Que dit-on de nouveau?
Je n'ai rien entendu.
Que dit-on dans la ville?
On dit que nous avons la guerre.
La guerre, avec quelle nation?
Avec les Français.
Que peuvent faire les Français
contre Alger?
Par mer rien, mais par terre ils
sont redoutables.
Si les Français débarquent Alger
est perdu.
Je pense que les Algériens ne se
batront (sic) pas.
Le Pacha sera donc obligé de
demander la paix.
Oui, s'il ne veut périr.
S'il veut la paix les Turcs
feront tapage.
Pour quoi (sic) ne fait-on pas
la paix?
Parce que le Pacha est entêté.